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RSC Chairman Hensarling Discusses President Bush's State of the Union Address

Highlights need for earmark reform, economic stimulus, & to keep America safe

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman Jeb Hensarling (R-TX), Chairman of the Republican Study Committee – a group of over 100 House conservatives, issued the following statement this evening on President Bush's final State of the Union Address:

"Tonight, we heard the final State of the Union Address from a President who has commanded our nation through some of its most difficult days, and I applaud him for his continued leadership and unrelenting will to keep America safe from the threat posed by radical Islamic terrorism.

"At its core, the theme of the President's speech was a conservative one – empowering American citizens with the freedom to make decisions for themselves and their families. As we address the most pressing issues facing our nation, the President's speech serves as an essential reminder that we must never abdicate from our responsibility to provide solutions that embody our most cherished principle – individual liberty. Though the issues which we debate will continue to change, our commitment to freedom must never waiver."

Rising to the Challenge of Earmark Reform:

"When it comes to Congressional earmarks there aren't just a few bad apples, the barrel is full of them. The American people have wised up to the fact that too often Congressional earmarks are about using their paychecks to preserve a Congressman's or Senator's paycheck.

"I applaud the President's commitment to veto any bill that doesn't cut the cost and number of Congressional earmarks in half. Congress must go further. The system is broken and must be fixed to the satisfaction of the American people. To that end, I hope that Democrats will join Republicans, who last week called for a moratorium on all earmark requests.

“Republicans must go further. There is no greater way to lead than by example. Within the last three months, we have seen rapid growth in the number of Members who have taken a personal earmark moratorium. To that end, I hope that senior Members of our Republican Conference – our appropriators, Committee Ranking Members, and especially Members of our Republican Leadership team – follow Leader Boehner’s example and pledge their own personal earmark moratorium until integrity is restored to the process.”

On Stimulating the American Economy:

“Unfortunately, there is very little economic stimulus in the so called ‘bi-partisan economic stimulus’ legislation that the President discussed. It is never a bad time to let hardworking families keep more of their own money and I know that now is an especially good time for family tax relief given rising energy, food, and tuition costs. However, temporary consumer tax rebates should not be confused with real economic stimulus. I believe that an opportunity to put together legislation that will actually grow and stimulate the economy is being missed. Any economic stimulus plan must actually include real economic stimulus.

“History shows us that the best way to provide an economic turnaround, preserve jobs, and spur economic growth is to ensure that job creators face a lower tax and regulatory burden, not to make matters worse by adding to the long term debt of the nation in this legislation. Thus, the new spending in this bill should be paid for by prioritizing it above lower priority spending.

“Part of our economic slowdown is due to the massive tax increases threatened by Democrats and the resulting uncertainty. Already we have the second highest tax rate on our business enterprises than any other industrialized nation in the world. Thus, nothing would help our economy more than preventing these tax increases and lowering the tax rate on our job creating businesses to make them more competitive with our international competitors.

“In order to jumpstart our economy, it is essential to focus on America’s small businesses and the middle class. Congress should also seek to reduce the corporate tax rate and capital gains rate while indexing gains attributable to inflation, as is contained in the Republican Study Committee’s Economic Growth Act of 2008. Making it easier for businesses to invest in the economy, the American people, and in jobs is the best way to protect and enlarge the paychecks of middle-income families.”

Where We Stand in Iraq:

“A year ago, when our Commander-in-Chief announced a controversial change in strategy in Iraq, Democrats responded with doubt, anger, and predictions of dire failure. A year later, we stand tall on the great progress that has been achieved by General Petraeus and the brave men and women of our armed forces.

“Last year, on the strength of Republican support, Congress provided our troops the resources needed for continued success. Today, though many Democrat leaders remain silent about Iraq, it is essential that all Americans remain resolute until our mission is achieved. In the interim, we must continue to provide our troops with the resources they need to achieve that victory.”

On Terrorism and Homeland Security:

“America has not been attacked on our own soil since September 11, 2001, and for that President Bush deserves a wealth of credit. While some may try to argue otherwise, the success of the Administration, our intelligence services, and our armed forces to protect our homeland is indisputable.

“That success continues to be undermined by Democrats who would needlessly tie the hands of intelligence officials, threatening the safety of every American. It is essential that we provide our intelligence services the tools needed to stay one step ahead of terrorists who seek to murder thousands of innocent Americans. Democrats have stalled for six months and we can no longer afford to wait. Congress must act immediately to pass a permanent fix to our FISA laws. If Al Qaeda is on the line, I don’t want our intelligence officials to be forced to hang up.”

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Congressman Jeb Hensarling is Chairman of the Republican Study Committee (RSC).

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